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United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 36/151 and 68/156. It describes the recommendations that were adopted by the Board of Trustees of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture at its thirty-ninth session.

* A/69/150.

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I. Introduction

A. Submission of the report

1. The present report was prepared in accordance with the arrangements approved by the General Assembly in its resolution 36/151, by which it established the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture. It presents the recommendations adopted by the Board of Trustees of the Fund at its thirty-ninth session, held in Geneva from 10 to 14 March 2014. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights approved the recommendations of the Board on behalf of the Secretary-General on 28 March 2014. The present report complements the report on the activities of the Fund submitted to the Human Rights Council at its twenty-fifth session (A/HRC/25/25).

B. Mandate of the Fund

2. The Fund receives voluntary contributions from Governments, non-governmental organizations and individuals. In accordance with its mandate and the practice established by its Board of Trustees, the Fund provides grants to established channels of assistance, including non-governmental organizations, associations of victims and family members of victims, private and public hospitals, legal clinics, public interest law firms and individual lawyers, that submit projects involving medical, psychological, social, financial, legal, humanitarian and other forms of direct assistance to victims of torture and members of their families.

C. Administration of the Fund and Board of Trustees

3. The Secretary-General administers the Fund through the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) with the advice of a Board of Trustees composed of five members acting in their personal capacity and appointed by the Secretary-General with due regard to equitable geographical distribution and in consultation with their Governments. The Board is currently composed of Maria Cristina de Mendonca (Portugal), Morad el-Shazly (Egypt), Anastasia Pinto (India) and Adam Bodnar (Poland). On 10 July 2014, the Secretary-General appointed Gaby Oré Aguilar (Peru) for a three-year term, renewable once, to replace Mercedes Doretti (Argentina) following the latter's resignation.

II. Management of grants

A. Admissibility criteria

4. Project admissibility criteria are outlined in the guidelines of the Fund for Victims of Torture, which were comprehensively revised at the thirty-ninth session of the Board of Trustees. The guidelines require a project to be presented by a non-governmental entity, including non-governmental organizations, associations of victims and family members of victims, private and public hospitals, legal clinics, public interest law firms and individual lawyers. The beneficiaries must be direct victims of torture or direct family members. Priority is given to projects providing

direct assistance to victims of torture, which may consist of medical or psychological assistance, help with social or financial reintegration through vocational training for victims or various forms of legal assistance for victims or members of their families, including assistance in seeking redress or applying for asylum. Depending on the resources available, the Fund may finance projects to organize training programmes, seminars or conferences to allow health-care professionals or other service providers to exchange and be trained on best practices. Requests for grants for projects involving investigation, research, studies, publications or similar activities are not admissible.

5. The Fund also provides emergency assistance for projects submitted in the intersessional period. Requests for this type of assistance are examined according to specific procedures outlined in the guidelines of the Fund. Emergency projects have to contain the same basic components as the regular ones (i.e. direct assistance to victims of torture and their families, non-governmental channels of assistance).

B. Monitoring and evaluation of grants

6. In accordance with the established practice of the Fund, evaluation and monitoring visits of organizations funded by the Fund are undertaken regularly by staff of the Fund secretariat, Board members and OHCHR field presences. Pre-screening visits are also undertaken to evaluate new project proposals. From 1 January 2014 to the time of writing the present report, visits have been conducted to some 62 projects in Argentina, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Chile, Croatia, Egypt, Guatemala, Guinea, India, Ireland, Jordan, Lebanon, Mali, Mexico, Myanmar, Nepal, Paraguay, Romania, Spain, Tunisia, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America and Ukraine.

7. During the reporting period, the joint secretariat for the humanitarian funds (responsible for the administration of this Fund, the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund on Contemporary Forms of Slavery and the Special Fund established by the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment) has continued to align working methods with a view to heightening cost-effectiveness and sharing best practices. These efforts were noted with satisfaction by the Board of Trustees and yielded closer coordination with OHCHR geographic desks and field presences, as well as other partners, such as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and resident coordinators.

III. Financial situation of the Fund

8. From 2008 to 2011, the annual voluntary contributions to the Fund decreased by 30 per cent ($3.6 million), amounting to $7.9 million in 2011. This negative trend appears to have come to a halt in 2013, although the Fund struggles to return to a satisfactory funding level, in other words a level that would enable it to meet all demands, including those made in the context of emergency and humanitarian crises.

9. Following the advice of the Board of Trustees, efforts have been made by the secretariat of the Fund, in coordination with the OHCHR External Outreach Service,

to increase the visibility of the Fund and relay information on the concrete impact it has on the ground. Since January 2014, a number of audio and visual tools have been developed, including informational flyers in all the working languages of the Fund and a dedicated web page illustrating stories of victims rehabilitated with the support of the Fund and featuring a short video on the emergency assistance provided to victims of torture from the Syrian Arab Republic seeking refuge in Lebanon (http://donatenow.ohchr.org/torture). The page also contains a "donate now" button. Regular information on the Fund's financial situation and needs has been shared with Member States, including at a briefing held by the Director of the Human Rights Treaties Division on 2 July 2014. Board members have also provided regular briefings on the Fund to Member State delegations, both bilaterally and in larger meetings.

Contributions and pledges received

10. The table below shows the contributions and pledges received since the previous report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly on the activities of the Fund (A/68/282). The contributions received since 1 January 2014 will enable the Board to make recommendations for grants to be disbursed for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2015 at its fortieth session, to be held in Geneva from 29 September to 4 October 2014. It should be recalled that, as indicated in *United Nations Human Rights Appeal 2014*, the Fund would need to raise at least $8.2 million in 2014 to make recommendations for grants for 2015.

Contributions and pledges received from 13 July 2013 to 1 July 2014

Donor	*Amount (United States dollars)*	*Date of receipt*
Contributions		
States		
Andorra	12 983	6 September 2013
Andorra	13 755	25 April 2014
Chile	10 000	15 April 2014
Denmark	545 355	5 December 2013
Egypt	10 000	9 July 2014
Finland	370 860	27 September 2013
Germany	547 195	27 March 2014
Holy See	916	14 March 2014
India	25 000	29 October 2013
Ireland	116 918	4 April 2014
Kuwait	10 000	18 February 2014
Morocco	2 000	23 October 2013
Norway	133 466	27 May 2014
Turkey	10 000	30 May 2014
United Arab Emirates	10 000	6 May 2014
United States of America	5 694 000	4 December 2013
Subtotal	**7 485 710**	

Donor	*Amount (United States dollars)*	*Date of receipt*
Private and public donors		
NJCM Nederlands Juristen Comite	4 080	11 March 2014
Individual	135	14 October 2013
European Union ambassadors	1 010	16 September 2013
Subtotal	**5 225**	
Total contributions	**7 490 935**	
Pledges		
Algeria	5 000	11 November 2013
Germany	203 804	30 July 2014
Total pledges	**208 804**	

IV. Thirty-ninth session of the Board of Trustees

11. The thirty-ninth session of the Board was held from 4 to 10 March 2014 and focused principally on policy issues. Following the discussions held during its thirty-seventh session, the Board recommended a sharpened focus and clearer grant-making parameters for the Fund. All recommendations in this regard were approved by the High Commissioner, on behalf of the Secretary-General, on 28 March 2014.

12. In determining the new objectives, the Board availed itself of the comprehensive statistical overview provided by the secretariat on the evolution of the Fund's grant-making since its establishment. It was noted that between 2003 and 2013, the project portfolio of the Fund had grown by 40 per cent in terms of grants awarded per annum, reaching a historical high of 270 projects in 2014, for an average grant size of $26,000. In the light of decreasing available resources, however, the Fund had progressively atomized its grants, with almost 50 per cent of the project portfolio of 2014 consisting of grants of $20,000 or less. Furthermore, it was noted that in 2014 only 10 per cent of the net resources available for grants had been awarded to newly identified projects for direct assistance and to emergency projects, whereas in the same year almost 50 per cent of the resources were invested in projects that had been funded by the Fund on a continuous basis for 11 years and more. Of the net resources available in 2014, 40 per cent are placed in projects based in the countries of the Western European and other States group.

13. The Board hence recommended the progressive introduction, as of 2015, of a case-by-case competitive review of project proposals, based on merit and documented needs, as well as on years of continuous support to the same project. It is expected that through competitiveness and clearer parameters for time-bound support to projects, by 2017 the Fund's project portfolio will be reduced to a manageable number of projects and that the average size of the grants will increase noticeably. The Fund should also progressively aim at a more balanced distribution of projects among the five regions of the world and an increased capacity to respond promptly to the assistance needs of victims of torture in new and emergency human rights situations, thereby adhering more strictly to General Assembly resolution

36/151. The Board also recommended that more resources be set aside to support the capacity-building of new rehabilitation centres, in particular in less developed regions. The Board will cyclically set geographic and thematic priorities, in line with the priorities of OHCHR, other United Nations torture-related mandates and the United Nations.

14. The Board reiterated the need for the Fund to stay true to its unique victim-centred and universal mandate. To do so, the Fund should strive for greater balance between its long-term support to already identified victims and its responsiveness to the plight of victims in new and emergency situations, as has been the case with emergency projects financed since in late 2012 in support of victims of torture fleeing the Syrian Arab Republic.

15. The Board will continue to pursue cooperation with other United Nations torture-related mechanisms. To that effect, during the thirty-ninth session a meeting was held with the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. Furthermore, following an exchange of letters with the Chair of the Committee against Torture, a member of the Board attended the fifty-second session of the Committee on 14 May 2014 to exchange information and strengthen synergies. A member of the Committee is in turn expected to meet with the Board during its fortieth session in September 2014.

V. United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture

16. On 26 June 2014, the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture was commemorated with the launch of a dedicated page (http://donatenow.ohchr.org/torture). On that day, statements were issued by the Secretary-General, the High Commissioner and, jointly, by the Committee against Torture, the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the Special Rapporteur on torture and the Board of Trustees of the Fund for Victims of Torture. In his statement, the Secretary-General recalled that the right of victims of torture to effective remedy, including rehabilitation, had yet to be realized, in particular in the context of armed conflicts and large-scale humanitarian crisis. The Fund is a practical tool of the United Nations to extend prompt assistance to victims of torture and their families and should be supported by States and private donors. The High Commissioner decried the fact that there were hundreds of thousands of victims of torture in every continent across the globe awaiting redress. Although 155 States had ratified the Convention against Torture, acts of torture were tolerated in many countries; furthermore, the obligation of States to ensure that victims of torture and ill-treatment obtain full and effective redress and reparation continued to be systematically neglected worldwide. The burden of rehabilitation was often borne by non-governmental organizations, many of which were supported by the Fund.

VI. How to make a contribution to the Fund

17. Governments, non-governmental organizations and other private or public entities can contribute to the Fund. For more information on how to contribute and further details about the Fund, donors are requested to contact the secretariat of the

United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, United Nations, CH 1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland; e-mail: unvfvt@ohchr.org; telephone: 41 22 917 9624; fax: 41 22 917 9017.

17. Donations can also be made online at http://donatenow.ohchr.org/torture. Information on the Fund can be found at www.ohchr.org/torturefund.

VII. Conclusions and recommendations

19. As stated by the Secretary-General on 26 June 2014, the Fund is a practical tool of the United Nations to extend prompt assistance to victims of torture and their families. It is an integral part of the United Nations work against torture, seeking to provide redress, including rehabilitation, to hundreds of thousands of victims of torture in all regions of the world.

20. Looking ahead, the Fund will strive to achieve a fairer balance in its portfolio of projects so as to be able to better respond to the assistance needs of the greatest number of victims of torture in all regions of the world. The Fund's guidelines have been revised to that effect.

21. The Board estimates that the Fund would need to receive $12 million on a yearly basis in order to respond adequately to the ever-increasing demands for assistance, in particular in the face of today's large-scale human rights crisis and conflicts. A "donate now" webpage was launched on 26 June 2014 (http://donatenow.ohchr.org/torture).

22. The Board stresses that contributing to the Fund is a concrete translation of the commitment of States towards the elimination of torture, in line with the Convention against Torture, in particular its article 14.